

Displaced Traffic in the AONB

We are writing with regard to the management of traffic displaced from the A413, due to congestion resulting from HS2 construction activity. Displacement of HGV traffic *not* involved in HS2 construction is a particular concern. This has the potential to increase the level of congestion in Chesham, and damage the network of lanes between Chartridge/Chesham/Rocky lane, which are currently an attractive feature of the area. We suggest some measures which might limit these adverse effects.

During the select committee hearings, evidence was presented which indicates that congestion can be anticipated not only at road junctions on the A413, but also on the narrower, unimproved stretches of road, which will (according to the traffic forecasts presented in the Environmental Statements) be loaded in excess of the maximum capacities defined in the DfT Roads and Bridges manual. This remains the case, after the Chiltern Tunnel extension (SES3/AP4 revision). Consequently the flow of traffic may be slowed or even halted for a time, during peak periods, and drivers may then seek alternative routes. There are few possibilities, none of which are suitable for significantly increased traffic. These are described below, together with possible management strategies.

Rocky Lane

This provides an obvious escape from the A413 for southbound traffic during the morning peak – either following the lanes through Chartridge to the A416 roundabout in Chesham, or turning off through The Lee and South Heath to the B485. However, the section of Rocky Lane from Hartley Farm to Swan Bottom is steep, narrow and in part sunken, and would not permit two HGVs to pass one another. A ban on HGVs using this section of road might prevent gridlock occurring, when vehicles were unable to pass

Bowood Lane

Bowood Lane is only just wide enough for a single car; on the sunken sections, a car cannot pass a pedestrian. It will be closed during the construction of the overbridge, but it would be better to close the section between Wendover Dean farm and Kings Ash Lane to vehicles, for the duration of the construction process.

Leather Lane

While wider than Bowood lane, Leather Lane is too narrow for cars to pass one another, and has few passing spaces. It could be made one way (downhill). While this would be inconvenient to the inhabitants of The Lee, it might be less inconvenient than having a two way road, frequently gridlocked.

B485 Frith Hill

This represents another escape route from congestion on the A413 , but is also a main route from Chesham to High Wycombe, Stoke Mandeville (A&E), and for school traffic between Chesham and Gt Missenden. Unfortunately the B485 enters Chesham through Chesham Old Town (Church Street); residents have been campaigning for a lorry ban here for some time, since the road is not wide enough for modern HGVs. A ban on HGVs between Church Street and the Jewson depot at Hyde End would alleviate the problems in Chesham Old Town, but probably increase traffic through Hyde Heath (Weedon Hill-Copperkins Lane).

If these proposals were adopted, then HGV access to the area bounded by the A413, B485 and Chartridge-Chesham-Rocky Lanes would be very restricted, the Kings Lane junction (near Annie Baileys) being the least bad option. The turn into Frith Hill (South Heath Leg) is unsuitable for HGVs, and Little Hundridge Lane is too steep and too narrow. The Kings Lane option is not ideal, as it would route traffic through South Heath, very close to the Chiltern Tunnel North Portal construction site.

Since the permanent portal access is from the Frith Hill (South Heath) road, it may be worth re-grading the junction with the B485 to allow long or heavy vehicles to negotiate the turn without grounding.

Conclusion

Any proposals to mitigate the effects of displaced traffic on the AONB lanes will have adverse effects on local residents, and impede HGV access. However, if nothing is done, then the unrestricted traffic flow has the potential to cause even worse problems.